Preface

by W. S. WOYTINSKY

The distinction between an autobiography and memoirs is somewhat vague. Webster defines "autobiography" as "memoirs of one's life written by oneself" and "memoirs" as "a history or narrative composed from personal experience or memory; often, esp., an account of one's life or episodes in it, written by oneself." The difference between the two definitions may seem almost imperceptible, yet I wish to stress that this book has been planned and written as memoirs, not as autobiography. I believe an account of my life, dramatic and rich though it has been to me, will be of interest to the reader only insofar as it reflects the experience of my generation and the impact of historical and political events I observed as an eyewitness or in which I took part.

Though early youth forms fundamental moral convictions, the years must, of necessity, change the perspective of the observer. I was not the same person during the first revolutionary storm over Russia in 1905 as I was during the second revolution of 1917; my ideas in the 1950's, when I was touring Asia and Latin America lecturing on world economics and the United States, were not the same as were those in the 1930's, when I was working with labor unions in Germany. Nor can a narrator obliterate entirely events of great import in his personal life. Thus, with my marriage in 1916, comes a new set of personal pronouns: the *I*, *me*, and *mine* become *we*, *us*, and *ours*. And along with the political events—which, all in all, make a rather sad story for my generation—must come some of the mighty, strange, and magnificent wonders of our natural world. Without these, our life would not have been so rich as it was.

The events I describe—covering more than fifty years—are in no sense an attempt to record history. They are, rather, the events I observed, and especially those in which I participated. I have recorded them because I feel that a deeper understanding of Russia's two revolutions—those of 1905 and 1917—may help readers to understand more clearly today's central and most critical problem: the Soviet Union.

To cope with the conflict between West and East, between democracy and totalitarianism, the West needs a far better understanding of the character, origins, and historical background of the Soviet system than it now possesses. Its knowledge of the U.S.S.R. and Communism, based on records that are faked and censored by the Kremlin, is not sufficient. We must turn the spotlight on those years between 1905 and 1917, in which latter year the totalitarian police state, as we now know it, was born. Surely it may be said that Communism has had